IN THE CLAIMS:

The following is a complete listing of the claims in this application, reflects all changes currently being made to the claims, and replaces all earlier versions and all earlier listings of the claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method, performed in a processing apparatus, of processing data defining at least three two-dimensional rectangular texture maps to generate data defining a single two-dimensional rectangular texture map containing all of the starting texture maps, the method comprising:

combining two of the texture maps by arranging them adjacent each other with an edge of one texture map parallel to an edge of the other texture map, and defining a rectangle containing the two texture maps, thereby generating a new texture map for subsequent combination; and

repeating the combining processing to combine texture maps in pairs, to generate a single two-dimensional rectangle containing the starting texture maps,

wherein the at least three two-dimensional rectangular texture maps that are combined include texture maps of different respective sizes.

2. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein, in the processing to combine each pair of texture maps, the rectangle defined to contain the two texture maps is the smallest rectangle which encloses the two texture maps.

3. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein the processing to combine each pair of texture maps comprises:

defining a plurality of different arrangements of the two texture maps, with the texture maps in each arrangement being adjacent with an edge of one texture map parallel to an edge of the other texture map;

defining a respective rectangle for each of the different arrangements, each rectangle containing the two texture maps; and

selecting one of the different arrangements for subsequent combination in dependence upon the defined rectangles.

4. (Original) A method according to claim 3, wherein the arrangement having the defined rectangle of smallest area is selected for subsequent combination.

5. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein the processing is performed to combine the texture maps in a plurality of different ways to generate a plurality of single texture maps containing the starting texture maps, and wherein processing is performed to select one single texture map from the plurality of generated single texture maps.

6. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 5, wherein the processing is performed to combine the texture maps in ~~all possible~~ the plurality of different ways, which plurality comprises all possible arrangements of the texture maps.

7. (Original) A method according to claim 5, wherein the one single texture map is selected from the plurality of generated single texture maps in dependence upon the lengths of the sides of the generated single texture maps.

8. (Original) A method according to claim 5, wherein the one single texture map is selected from the plurality of generated single texture maps in dependence upon the areas of the generated single texture maps.

9. (Original) A method according to claim 1, further comprising generating a signal, either directly or indirectly, carrying the data defining the single texture map containing all of the starting texture maps.

10. (Original) A method according to claim 1, further comprising making a recording of the data defining the single texture either directly or indirectly.

11. (Currently Amended) Apparatus for processing data defining at least three two-dimensional rectangular texture maps to generate data defining a single two-dimensional rectangular texture map containing all of the starting texture maps, the apparatus comprising:

a texture map combiner operable to combine two of the texture maps by arranging them adjacent each other with an edge of one texture map parallel to an edge of the other texture map and to define a rectangle containing the two texture maps, thereby generating a new texture map for subsequent combination; and a controller operable to control the texture map combiner to repeat the combining processing to combine texture maps in pairs, to generate a single two-dimensional rectangle containing the starting texture maps,

wherein the at least three two-dimensional rectangular texture maps that are combined include texture maps of different respective sizes.

12. (Original) Apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the texture map combiner is operable to define the rectangle containing the two texture maps as the smallest rectangle which encloses the two texture maps.

13. (Original) Apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the texture map combiner comprises:

an arrangement definer operable to define a plurality of different arrangements of the two texture maps, with the texture maps in each arrangement being adjacent with an edge of one texture map parallel to an edge of the other texture map;

a rectangle definer operable to define a respective rectangle for each of the different arrangements, each rectangle containing the two texture maps; and

an arrangement selector operable to select one of the different arrangements for subsequent combination in dependence upon the defined rectangles.

14. (Original) Apparatus according to claim 13, wherein the arrangement selector is operable to select the arrangement having the defined rectangle of smallest area for subsequent combination.

15. (Original) Apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the controller is operable to control the texture map combiner to perform the processing to combine the texture maps in a plurality of different ways to generate a plurality of single texture maps containing the starting texture maps, and wherein the apparatus further comprises a single texture map selector operable to select one single texture map from the plurality of generated single texture maps.

16. (Currently Amended) Apparatus according to claim 15, wherein the controller is operable to control the texture map combiner to perform processing to combine the texture maps in ~~all possible~~ the plurality of different ways, which plurality comprises all possible arrangements of the texture maps.

17. (Original) Apparatus according to claim 15, wherein the single texture map selector is operable to select the one single texture map from the plurality of generated single texture maps in dependence upon the lengths of the sides of the generated single texture maps.

18. (Original) Apparatus according to claim 15, wherein the single texture map selector is operable to select the one single texture map from the plurality of generated single texture maps in dependence upon the areas of the generated single texture maps.

19. (Currently Amended) Apparatus for processing data defining at least three two-dimensional rectangular texture maps to generate data defining a single two-dimensional rectangular texture map containing all of the starting texture maps, the apparatus comprising:

combining means for combining two of the texture maps by arranging them adjacent each other with an edge of one texture map parallel to an edge of the other texture map and for defining a rectangle containing the two texture maps, thereby generating a new texture map for subsequent combination; and

means for controlling the combining means to repeat the combining processing to combine texture maps in pairs, to generate a single two-dimensional rectangle containing the starting texture maps,

wherein the at least three two-dimensional rectangular texture maps that are combined include texture maps of different respective sizes.

20. (Original) A storage medium storing computer program instructions for programming a programmable processing apparatus to become operable to perform a method as set out in any of claims 1 to 8.

21. (Original) A signal carrying computer program instructions for programming a programmable processing apparatus to become operable to perform a method as set out in any of claims 1 to 8.